AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES


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The Institute for Research in African-American Studies was established at Columbia in 1993, expanding the University’s commitment to this field of study. The African-American studies curriculum explores the historical, cultural, social, and intellectual contours of the development of people of African descent. The curriculum enables students to master the basic foundations of interdisciplinary knowledge in the humanities and social sciences in the black American, Caribbean, and sub-Saharan experience.

Courses examine the cultural character of the African diaspora; its social institutions and political movements; its diversity in thought, belief systems, and spiritual expressions; and the factors behind the continuing burden of racial inequality. During their junior and senior years of study, students focus their research within a specific discipline or regional study relevant to the African diaspora.

Students should consider a major in African American and African Diaspora studies if they are interested in careers where strong liberal arts preparation is needed, such as fields in the business, social service, or government sectors. Depending on one’s area of focus within the major, the African American and African Diaspora studies program can also prepare individuals for career fields like journalism, politics, public relations, and other lines of work that involve investigative skills and working with diverse groups. A major in African American and African Diaspora studies can also train students in graduate research skills and methods, such as archival research, and is very useful for individuals who are considering an advanced graduate degree such as the Ph.D.

Departmental Honors

The requirements for departmental honors in African American and African Diaspora studies are as follows:

1. All requirements for major must be completed by graduation date;
2. Minimum GPA of 3.6 in the major;
3. Completion of senior thesis—due to the director of undergraduate studies on the first Monday in April.

A successful thesis for departmental honors must be selected as the most outstanding paper of all papers reviewed by the thesis committee in a particular year. The Thesis Evaluation Committee is comprised of department faculty and led by the director of undergraduate studies. The thesis should be of superior quality, clearly demonstrating originality and excellent scholarship, as determined by the committee. Normally no more than 10% of graduating majors receive departmental honors in a given academic year.

The African American and African Diaspora Studies Department Thesis

Although the senior thesis is a prerequisite for consideration for departmental honors, all African American and African Diaspora studies majors are strongly encouraged to consider undertaking thesis work even if they are ineligible or do not wish to be considered for departmental honors. The senior thesis gives undergraduate majors the opportunity to engage in rigorous, independent, and original research on a specific topic of their choosing, the result of which is a paper of 35-60 pages in length.

The senior thesis must be written under the supervision of at least one faculty member. Should the thesis writer elect to have more than one thesis adviser (either from the outset or added on during the early stages of research), these faculty in the aggregate comprise the Thesis Committee, of which one faculty member must be designated chair. In either case, it is incumbent upon the thesis writer to establish with the thesis chair and committee a reasonable schedule of deadlines for submission of outlines, chapters, bibliographies, drafts, etc.

In many cases, thesis writers may find that the most optimal way in which to complete a thesis is to formally enroll in an AFAS independent study course with their thesis adviser as the instructor. All third year students interested in writing a thesis should notify the director of undergraduate studies and submit the name of the faculty adviser ideally by October 1, but certainly no later than the end of the fall semester of their junior year. In close consultation with the thesis adviser, students develop a viable topic, schedule of meetings, bibliography, and timeline for completion (including schedule of drafts and outlines).

Departmental Prizes

Ralph Johnson Bunche Award for Leadership and Service

The Bunche Award recognizes an undergraduate who has demonstrated a tremendous capacity for leadership and provided distinguished service to the Institute for Research in African American Studies.

The award is named in honor of Ralph Johnson Bunche (1901-1971), the highest American official in the United Nations. For his conduct of negotiations leading to an armistice in the First Arab-Israeli War, he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950; he was the first African American recipient of this honor.

Ella Baker Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement

The Ella Baker Prize is awarded annually to an undergraduate who has demonstrated academic excellence, intellectual commitment to the field of African American Studies and who has written a thesis that advances our understanding of the African American experience.

The award is named for the brilliant activist, organizer, leader and Harlem resident, Ella Baker. Baker served as a field secretary for the NAACP before organizing the Southern Christian Leadership Conference under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King. Following her departure from SCLC she helped student activists organize the Student Non-violent
Coordinating Committee. She would serve as an important mentor to these young people throughout the rest of her life.

**Senior Faculty**

Kevin Fellezs (Music)
Robert Gooding-Williams (Philosophy)
Farah J. Griffin (English and Comparative Literature)
Frank Guridy (History)
Kellie E. Jones (Art History and Archaeology)
Samuel K. Roberts (History)
Josef Sorett (Religion)
Sudhir A. Venkatesh (Sociology)
Mabel O. Wilson (Architecture, Planning and Preservation)

**Research Fellows**

Vanessa Argard-Jones (Anthropology)
Fredrick C. Harris (Political Science)
Carl Hart (Psychology)
Obery Hendricks (Religion/African-American Studies)
Colin Wayne Leach (Psychology and Africana Studies, Barnard College)
Natasha Lightfoot (History)
Mignon Moore (Sociology - Barnard)

**Affiliated Faculty**

Belinda Archibong (Economics)
Christopher Brown (History)
Maguette Camara (Dance - Barnard)
Mamadou Diouf (Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies)
Ann Douglas (English and Comparative Literature)
Barbara Fields (History)
Saidiya Hartman (English and Comparative Literature)
Ousmane Kane (School of International and Public Affairs)
Rashid Khalidi (History)
George E. Lewis (Music)
Mahmood Mamdani (Anthropology)
Gregory Mann (History)
Robert O’Meally (English and Comparative Literature)
David Scott (Anthropology)
Susan Strum (Law School)

**In Memorium**

Marcellus Blount
Steven Gregory
Manning Marable, founder of IRAAS

**Guidelines for all majors and concentrators**

**Governed Electives**

The “governed electives” category must include courses from at least three different departments, providing an interdisciplinary background in the field of African-American Studies. (Note: you cannot count one of your governed electives within your designated area of study).

**Designated Area of Study**

A Designated Area of Study, preferably within a distinct discipline (for example, history, politics, sociology, literature, anthropology, psychology, etc.). Students may also select courses within a particular geographical area or region or an interdisciplinary field of study.

Any of the departmental disciplines (history, political science; sociology, anthropology, literature, art history; psychology, religion, music, etc.)

Any of the pertinent area studies (African Studies; Caribbean/Latin American; Gender Studies; etc.).

Please note that the major/concentrator is not allowed to “create” or “make up” a designated area of study without the direct approval of the Director of Undergraduate Studies, and that such approval must be sought before the student has embarked on the course of designated area of study, and that such approval will be granted only in very rare and exceptional cases. Under no circumstances should the major/concentrator hope to take a series of courses only later to “create” a Designated Area of Study around these courses.

**Major in African American and African Diaspora Studies**

A minimum of twenty-seven (27) points is required for the completion of the major. The major should be arranged in consultation with the director of undergraduate studies. Students interested in majoring should plan their course of study no later than the end of their sophomore year.

**Core Requirements**

All majors must complete to satisfaction the core required courses. The core requirements are:

(1) Introduction to African-American Studies - 4 Points
(2) Major Debates in African-American Studies - 4 Points
(3) Governed Elective - 4 Points
(4) Governed Elective - 4 Points
(5) Senior Seminar - 4 Points
(6) Designated Area of Study Course (DAS) - 3 Points
(7) DAS or Senior Pro Seminar - 4 Points

**Concentration in African American and African Diaspora Studies**

A minimum nineteen (19) points is required for the completion of the concentration.

**Core Requirements**

All concentrators must complete to satisfaction the core required courses. The core requirements are:

(1) Introduction to African-American Studies - 4 Points
(2) Governed Elective - 4 Points
(3) Governed Elective - 4 Points
(4) Senior Seminar - 4 Points
(5) Designated Area of Study Course (DAS) - 3-4 Points
AFAS UN1001 INTRO TO AFRICAN-AMER STUDIES. 4.00 points.
Prerequisites: Students need to register for a section of AFAS UN1010, the required discussion section for this course. From the arrival of enslaved Africans to the recent election of President Barack Obama, black people have been central to the story of the United States, and the Americas, more broadly. African Americans have been both contributors to, and victims of, this “New World” democratic experiment. To capture the complexities of this ongoing saga, this course offers an interdisciplinary exploration of the development of African-American cultural and political life in the U.S. but also in relationship to the different African diasporic outposts of the Atlantic world. The course will be organized both chronologically and thematically, moving from the “middle passage” to the present so-called “post-racial” moment—drawing on a range of classical texts, primary sources, and more recent secondary literature—to grapple with key questions, concerns, and problems (i.e. agency, resistance, culture, etc.) that have preoccupied scholars of African-American history, culture, and politics. Students will be introduced to a range of disciplinary methods and theoretical approaches (spanning the humanities and social sciences), while also attending to the critical tension between intellectual work and everyday life, which are central to the formation of African-American Studies as an academic field. This course will engage specific social formations (i.e. migration, urbanization, globalization, etc.), significant cultural/political developments (i.e. uplift ideologies, nationalism, feminism, Pan-Africanism, religion/spirituality, etc.), and hallmark moments/movements (i.e. Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights movement, etc.). By the end of the semester, students will be expected to possess a working knowledge of major themes/figures/traditions, alongside a range of cultural/political practices and institutional arrangements, in African-American Studies.

AFAS UN1002 Major Debates in African-American Studies. 4.00 points.
Prerequisites: Students must register for discussion section, AFAS UN1003.
Prerequisites: Students must register for discussion section, AFAS UN1003. This course will focus on the major debates in African-American Studies from the role of education to the political uses of art. The class will follow these debates historically with attention to the ways in which earlier discussions on migration and emigration, for example, were engaged with the specific historical conjuncture in which they took place as well as in the myriad ways in which earlier debates continue to resonate today. There will be a mix of primary documents and secondary sources and commentary.

AFAS UN1003 Blackness and Frenchness: A Radical Genealogy. 4.00 points.
CC/GS/SEAS: Partial Fulfillment of Global Core Requirement

How have Black radicals embraced the French language and, at times, Frenchness without espousing France's dominance and its doctrines of assimilation? This course explores the watershed moments from the past three centuries that redefine the articulations of blackness in French, in France and beyond—from revolutionary or constitutional independence in the post-colony to recent social movements in continental Europe. In addition to the opening inquiry, guiding questions for this course include but are not limited to the following. What kinds of state-sanctioned backlash in France have ensued in the face of affirmative rejections of blackness (e.g. Négritude and Afroféminisme)? And, what are the historical linkages between Black radicalism in France and the United States? Through an intra-imperial and inter-imperial lens, this course will center contributions from Black writers, artists, and intellectuals of divergent colonial histories with especial consideration to those for whom French and France is their native language and land.

AFAS UN3030 AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSIC. 3.00 points.
This course focuses on a central question: how do we define “African-American music”? In attempting to answer this question, we will be thinking through concepts such as authenticity, representation, recognition, cultural ownership, appropriation, and origin(s). These concepts have structured the ways in which critics, musicians and audiences have addressed the various social, political and aesthetic contexts in which African-American music has been composed (produced), performed (re-produced) and heard (consumed).

AFAS UN3930 TOPICS IN THE BLACK EXPERIENCE. 4.00 points.
Please refer to Institute for Research in African American Studies for course section descriptions: http://iraas.columbia.edu/
AFAS UN3936 Black Intellectuals Seminar. 4 points.
AFAM Major/Concentrator required course

This undergraduate seminar examines a diverse group of black intellectuals’ formulations of ideologies and theories relative to racial, economic and gender oppression within the context of dominant intellectual trends. The intellectuals featured in the course each contributed to the evolution of black political thought, and posited social criticisms designed to undermine racial and gender oppression, and labor exploitation around the world. This group of black intellectuals’ work will be analyzed, paying close attention to the way that each intellectual inverts dominant intellectual trends, and/or uses emerging social scientific disciplines to counter racism, sexism, and classism. This seminar is designed to facilitate an understanding of the black intellectual tradition that has emerged as a result of African-American thinkers’ attempts to develop a unified response to an understanding of the black condition. This course explores of a wide range of primary and secondary sources from several different periods, offering students opportunity to explore the lives and works of some of the most important black intellectuals. We will also consider the way that period-specific intellectual phenomenon such as Modernism, Marxism, Pan-Africanism, and Feminism combined with a host of social realities.

AFAS UN3940 SENIOR THESIS SEMINAR. 4.00 points.
The Senior Seminar will afford thesis writers the chance to workshop their idea, conduct research and/or interviews, work with the IRB protocols (if necessary), learn to work with archival materials, and perform other research activities prior to writing thesis. Students who choose to write a capstone paper or conduct a capstone project can choose an elective course the following semester. The Thesis Seminar, conducted in the spring semester, is a workshop-oriented course for Senior Thesis writers organized around honing their writing skills while providing guidance to students in their field/disciplinary-specific projects. For example, a student may choose to write a historical biography of an artist while another may pursue a sociological study of the effects of mass incarceration on voting rights. The instructor of the Thesis Seminar, working with a faculty adviser (dependent on the specific field of inquiry in the thesis), will provide feedback and supervise the writing schedule of the students.

AFAS GU4032 Image and identity in Contemporary Advertising. 4 points.
Open to undergraduate sophomores, juniors, and seniors; and MA students only. Not offered during 2023-2024 academic year.

This course examines the organization of contemporary advertising industry. A special emphasis is placed on the role of diversity and difference, including but not restricted to the ways that race, ethnicity, and other demographic/social difference impact both the profession and the creative process. Advertising is a polyglot organizational field consisting of traditional advertising agencies, but also digital companies and social media firms that use creative marketing techniques, such as crowdsourcing and viral marketing. We will consider the ways that corporations and those in their service produce and consume information and image, in an effort to shape individual and collective identities, and to market goods and services. The course is organized around collective discussion.

AFAS GU4035 Criminal Justice and the Carceral State in the 20th Century United States. 4 points.
To apply for course enrollment, please contact Prof. Samuel Roberts (skroberts@columbia.edu).

This course provides an introduction to historical and contemporary concepts and issues in the U.S. criminal justice system, including state violence; the evolution of modern policing; inequality and criminal justice policy; drug policy as urban policy; and the development of mass incarceration and the “carceral continuum.” The writing component to this course is a 20-25 page research paper on a topic to be developed in consultation with the instructor. This course has been approved for inclusion in the African-American Studies and History undergraduate curricula.

AFAS GU4037 Third World Studies. 4 points.
Introduction to third world studies; an introduction to the methods and theories that inform the field of third world studies (aka ethnic studies), including imperialism, colonialism, third world liberation movements, subjectivities, and racial and social formation theories;

AFAS GU4031 POPULAR MUSIC/PROTEST MOVEMENTS. 4.00 points.
Open to graduate students and limited advanced undergraduates.

This course will examine the relationship between popular music and popular movements. We will be taking a historical, as well as a thematic, approach to our investigation as a way to trace various legacies within popular music that fall under the rubric of “protest music” as well as to think about the ways in which popular music has assisted various communities to speak truth to power. We will also consider the ways in which the impact of the music industry has either lessened or enhanced popular music’s ability to articulate “protest” or “resistance” to hegemonic power.
AFAS GU4080 Black Feminist Imaginaries: Practices and Poethics. 4.00 points.

This seminar will focus on theories, practices, and literature of Black thought and Black feminist imaginaries. We will read some of the significant Black feminist scholarship and literature that have emerged over the past three centuries with particular attention to Black feminist theorizing of the intersections of race and gender. The bulk of our reading will concentrate on 20th and 21st century texts with particular attention to the ways that Black feminists (even those retroactively so-named) have long insisted on the material, social, and spiritual significance of Black lives, Black life, and Black thought. In this course, we will read across genre and field to consider the myriad discourses in which Black feminist theorizing has intervened. The list of writers, artists, and thinkers whose work will guide our interrogations include Phillis Wheatley, Rebecca Cox Jackson, Zora Neale Hurston, Fanny Lou Hamer, Johnetta B. Cole, Audre Lorde, Angela Davis, Hortense Spillers, June Jordan, Toni Cade Bambara, Toni Morrison, Lucille Clifton, Susan Lori Parks, Saidiya Hartman, Adrienne Piper, Daphne Brooks, and Carrie Mae Weems, among others. Central to the course investigations is Carolyn Martin Shaw’s description in “Disciplining the Black Female Body: Learning Feminism in Africa and the United States”: “The individual, the social agent or actor, is a product of culture and produces culture. An individual’s subjectivity is determined by that which he or she is subject to (such as laws, language, and stories) and that which he or she is subject of (such as personal decisions, actions, and stories). What holds together fragmentary cultures and part societies? I find the term discourse useful for thinking about linkages and articulations within and across “part societies.” And across fields. Black feminist imaginaries offer discourses which intervene in dominating narrative, language, image, and knowledge structures. Multiple areas of knowledge and knowledge production must be brought to bear. We will read and think through how Black feminist imaginaries may reframe our understandings of the individual, the state, and the state over time. We will read and think through how Black feminist imaginaries may reframe our understandings of the individual, the state, and the state to bear. We will read and think through how Black feminist imaginaries may reframe our understandings of the individual, the state, and the state today.

ENGL GU4621 HARLEM RENAISSANCE. 3.00 points.

(Lecture). This course will focus on the arts of the Harlem Renaissance as experiments in cultural modernity and as forms of incipient political empowerment. What was the Harlem Renaissance? Where and when did it take place? Who were its major players? What difference did it make to everyday Harlemites? What were its outposts beyond Harlem itself? Was there a rural HR? An international HR? As we wonder about these problems of definition, we will set up the usual literary/historical framework with considerations of music and painting of the period. How to fit Bessie Smith into a frame with W.E.B. Du Bois? Ellington with Zora Neale Hurston? Aaron Douglas with Langston Hughes? Where is Harlem today? Does it survive as more than a memory, a trace? Is it doomed to be black no more? How does Harlem function in our national/international? imagination? Has the Harlem Renaissance’s moment come and gone? What continuities might we detect? What institutions from the early twentieth century have endured?

ENGL GU4622 AFRICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE II. 3.00 points.

(Lecture). This survey of African American literature focuses on language, history, and culture. What are the contours of African American literary history? How do race, gender, class, and sexuality intersect within the politics of African American culture? What can we expect to learn from these literary works? Why does our literature matter to student of social change? This lecture course will attempt to provide answers to these questions, as we begin with Zora Neale Hurston’s Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937) and Richard Wright’s Native Son (1940) and end with Melvin Dixons Loves Instruments (1995) with many stops along the way. We will discuss poetry, fiction, drama, and non-fictional prose. Other authors include Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Gwendolyn Brooks, Malcolm X, Ntozake Shange, Audre Lorde, and Toni Morrison. There are no prerequisites for this course. The formal assignments are two five-page essays and a final examination. Class participation will be graded.

Of Related Interest

Africana Studies (Barnard)

AFRS BC2004 INTRODUCTN TO AFRICAN STUDIES
AFRS BC2005 CARIBBEAN CULTURE & SOCIETIES
AFRS BC2006 INTRODUCTION AFRICAN DIASPORA
AFRS BC3020 Harlem Crossroads
AFRS BC3055 Slave Resistance in the United States from the Colonial Era to the Civil War
AFRS BC3100 Medicine and Power in African History
AFRS BC3110 THE AFRICANA COLLOQUIUM
AFRS BC3120 History of African-American Music
AFRS BC3121 Black Women in America
AFRS BC3146 African American and African Writing and the Screen
AFRS BC3150 RACE & PERFORMANCE IN CARIBBEAN
AFRS BC3517 African American Women and Music
AFEN BC3525 Atlantic Crossings: The West Indies and the Atlantic World
AFRS BC3528 Harlem on My Mind: The Political Economy of Harlem
AFRS BC3550 GAY HARLEM
AFRS BC3560 Human Rights and Social Change in Sub-Saharan Africa
African-American Studies

AFRS BC3570 African Issues: Diasporas of the Indian Ocean
AFRS BC3589 BLK SEXUAL PLTCS U.S.POP CLTR
AFRS BC3590 The Middle Passage

American Studies
AMST UN3930 Topics in American Studies
AMST UN3931 Topics in American Studies

Anthropology
ANTH UN1130 Africa and the Anthropologist
ANTH UN2005 THE ETHNOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION
ANTH V3005 Africa: Culture and Society
ANTH UN3850 Psychoanalysis, Colonialism, and Race
ANTH UN3983 Ideas and Society in the Caribbean

Anthropology (Barnard)
ANTH V3005 Africa: Culture and Society
ANTH V3943 Youth and Identity Politics in Africa
ANTH UN3946 African Cultural Production
ANTH UN3983 Ideas and Society in the Caribbean
ANTH V3988 Race/Sexuality Science and Social Practice

Art History and Archaeology
AHIS UN2500 ARTS OF AFRICA
AHIS W3897 Black West: African-American Artists in the Western United States

Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race
CSER UN1012 History of Racialization in the United States
CSER UN3940 COMP STUDY OF CONSTITUTNL CHAL

Dance (Barnard)
DNCE BC3578 Traditions of African-American Dance

Economics
ECON GU4438 ECONOMICS OF RACE IN THE U.S.

English and Comparative Literature
ENGL W3400 African-American Literature I

English (Barnard)
ENWS BC3144 Minority Women Writers in the United States
ENGL BC3196 HARLEM RENAISSANCE LITERATURE

History
AFCV UN1020 AFRICAN CIVILIZATION
HIST UN2432 U.S. ERA OF CIVIL WAR # RECON
HIST UN2523 HEALTH INEQUALITY: MODERN US
HIST UN2540 HISTORY OF THE SOUTH
HIST UN2618 The Modern Caribbean
HIST W3575 Power and Place: Black Urban Politics
HIST W3662 Slave Memory in Brazil: Public History and Audiovisual Narratives in Perspective
HIST UN3429 TELLING ABOUT THE SOUTH
HIST UN3518 COLUMBIA UNI # SLAVERY
HIST UN2772 West African History
HIST W4404 Native American History
HIST UN3779 AFRICA AND FRANCE
HIST UN3928 SLAVERY/ABOLITION-ATLANTC WRLD
HIST GU4984 HACKING THE ARCHIVE: LAB FOR COMP. HIST

HIST W4434 The Atlantic Slave Trade
HIST GU4584 Drug Policy and Race
HIST GU4588 RACE, DRUGS, AND INEQUALITY
HIST W4985 Citizenship, Race, Gender and the Politics of Exclusion

History (Barnard)

Jazz Studies
JAZZ W3100 Jazz and American Culture
JAZZ GU4900 Jazz and the Literary Imagination

Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies
MDES UN2030 Major Debates in the Study of Africa

Music
MUSI UN2016 JAZZ
MUSI UN2020 SALSA, SOCA # REGGAE
MUSI W4435 Music and Performance in the African Postcolony

Political Science
POLS UN3245 RACIAL AND ETHNIC POLITICS
POLS UN3604 War, Peace, and International Interventions in Africa

Political Science (Barnard)
POLS BC3101 * Colloquium on Black Political Thought
POLS BC3810 *Colloquium on Aid, Politics & Violence in Africa

Psychology
PSYC UN2640 INTRO TO SOCIAL COGNITION
PSYC UN2650 INTRO TO CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY
PSYC GU4615 PSYCH OF CULTURE & DIVERS

Religion
RELI UN2334 RELIGIONS OF HARLEM
RELI UN2335 RELI IN BLACK AMERICA:AN INTRO
RELI UN3630 Religion and Black Popular Cultures
RELI V3650 Religion and the Civil Rights Movement
RELI GU4355 AFR AM PROPHETIC POL TRADITION
RELI W4826 Religion, Race and Slavery

Religion (Barnard)
RELI UN3203 RELIGION IN THE MODERN US
RELI W4826 Religion, Race and Slavery

Sociology
SOCI UN2420 RACE # PLACE IN URBAN AMERICA
SOCI W3277 Post-Racial America?

Women's and Gender Studies
WMST GU4300 Queer Theory/ Visual Culture